

American Norwegians to Raise \$1,000,000 for the Old Land



A. C. FJELLAND
Vice-Consul
for Norway



TRONDHJEM CATHEDRAL
Oldest Church in Northern Europe



REV. M. W. HALVORSEN
Pastor Norwegian-
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KNUT MOLUF
Pres. Norwegian Pleasure Society

MAY 17, 1814, was promulgated what has been called "the freest organic law that Europe had known." It was the constitution of Norway, presented to the world by a handful of brave men, elected as a constituent assembly, and sitting at Elidsvold. This constitution is still in force, and, barring the constitution of the United States, is now the oldest written organic law of any sovereign nation. The subsequent union with Sweden, and the dissolution of that union a few years ago, necessitated but few changes in the instrument framed at Elidsvold in 1814.

So enthusiastic were the Norwegian people over the sublime courage exhibited by their representatives that rejoicing was general all over the kingdom. Mrs. Jonas B. Wangberg of Omaha still has in her possession a vest worn by her grandfather almost 100 years ago. All over the cloth, and woven into it on the loom, is the word "Constitution" in gilt letters, which are as plain today as when first printed. This vest was worn during the celebrations at Trondhjem, where the kings of Norway have been crowned, and many of them buried, for centuries past.

That the people of Norway had just cause to rejoice and to be proud of the work of their constitution-makers will be realized when we recall something of the conditions existing in Europe at that time. The Norwegian charter of liberty was born amid storm and stress. A writer in Skandinaven, published at Chicago, thus epitomizes the situation at that time:

People Refused to Be Sold.

"The united kingdom of Denmark and Norway had cast its lot with Napoleon. When his defeat at Leipzig foreshadowed his early downfall the powers of Europe decreed that Norway should be separated from Denmark and ceded to Sweden. The Danish-Norwegian king was compelled to bow to the verdict. But the people of Norway would not be sold. They knew that under the law of nations their country was now left without any entangling alliances, without any royal house to claim the crown—absolutely free and of right the mistress of her own destiny. She was not prepared for a great struggle. The population was small, less than a million souls, and the people were weak; the financial system was disorganized and the currency bad, and famine stalked abroad in the land as a result of bad crops and the English blockade of all the seaports of Norway. The armies of Napoleon were scattered and in the councils of Europe absolutism was supreme and might was right.

"In the face of such overwhelming difficulties and dangers the people unanimously resolved to shape their own destiny and elected representatives to a constituent assembly. With the thunder from the mighty struggles in continental Europe reverberating among their mountains these men, worthy of the best traditions of their race, took up their task with a stern determination to do or die."

Thus, when proclaimed, the organic law of Norway was a gift of a free people to themselves. Through all the vicissitudes of fateful centuries the freeholder of Norway remained a free man, a king of his manor, and when it sounded the historic call of 1814 found him strong and ready and equal to the task.

Like American Constitution.

The fact is noted by Norwegian writers that the law-makers at Elidsvold were familiar with the famous work of Montesquieu (*L'esprit des lois*), the free constitutions that had but recently been adopted in America, France and Spain, and with the constitutional practices of England as well. The Elidsvold law, like the constitution of the United States, incorporates the Montesquieu trinity of co-ordinate powers—the legislative, the judicial and the executive. The prerogatives of the law-making power were guarded with special care. The adoption of the principle of ministerial responsibility to the Parliament is probably the most important change that has been made, because of subsequent changes in government. The right of suffrage has been gradually extended and the franchise is now universal for men and women.

Again quoting Skandinaven: "Norwegians who have become citizens of the United States and their descendants take pride in the liberty and laws of Norway. As loyal American citizens they can celebrate Norway's day of freedom because the 17th of May and the Fourth of July symbolize the same principles and teach the same lessons of government and citizenship. Every Norwegian who lands on our shores comes schooled in the rights and duties of popular government. To him the change of country does not involve a change of social or governmental system. The red, white and blue flag of America and the red, white and blue flag of Norway both alike represent popular liberty and justice. Hence, if he is a good Norwegian he will become a good American."

Along the same line was the address of former President Roosevelt, made to the king and queen of Norway at the time of his reception at their capital on his return from Africa:

"There are many and close ties which bind the people of my country to the people of yours. We have many Norwegian immigrants, and we have found

them such good citizens that I rather grudge they left anybody behind in Norway. They find love of the land of their birth and love of the country of their adoption entirely compatible. A man can love his wife all the better if he loves his mother a great deal. I cannot imagine any civilized man who cares for the history of the white race not feeling a peculiar emotion here in Norway. After the downfall of the Greco-Roman civilization it was the Norse literature that represented the first literary movement, the first movement of cultivation in all Europe, which did not spring from Greco-Roman originals, until there sprang up that great body of sagas which are being read with a more and more intense interest all over the world."

Raising \$1,000,000 for Old Land.

At this time a movement is on foot in the United States among Norwegian citizens to raise \$1,000,000 for presentation to the mother land in 1914, when will be celebrated the 100th anniversary of the constitution. For this particular purpose a Woman's auxiliary to the Norwegian Men's Mindegevekomite is being organized all over the country, with Mrs. A. C. Fjelland of St. Paul as the national president. Branches of the auxiliary will be organized in all states throughout the union and each state will have two vice presidents, who, meeting with the vice presidents of other states, will form the national executive board.

Already auxiliaries have been formed in several



A. HAUGET
Director Norwegian Singing Society



SINGING SOCIETY

of the states, and some of the vice presidents, who will form the executive board, have been elected.

To date the officers elected are Mrs. A. C. Fjelland of St. Paul, national president; Mrs. T. H. Dahl, Minneapolis, first national vice president; Mrs. Gisla Rohnes of Minneapolis, second vice president. State vice presidents so far elected, who make up the executive board, are Mrs. M. Melgaard of Minnesota, Mrs. William Gerner and Mrs. Oscar Haugen of Illinois; Mrs. A. H. Dahl and Mrs. E. B. Steensland of Wisconsin; Mrs. Seehus of Iowa, Mrs. J. O. Tweten of Washington, D. C.; Mrs. Martin Berg and Mrs. K. Zeltitz of South Dakota, and Mrs. F. B. Homness and Mrs. Tromnes of North Dakota.

Will Restore Ancient Cathedral.

Of the \$1,000,000 the Norwegians intend to raise 250,000 kroner, or \$50,000, will go toward restoring the old cathedral in Trondhjem, Norway, the oldest Christian church in the north and one of the oldest in the world. This cathedral was founded in the eleventh century, over the tomb of St. Olaf, and all the Norwegian kings since then, including the present ruler of Norway, have been crowned in it. The picture reproduced in this article was loaned by Mrs. Wangberg. It was taken when she was a girl, before the old church had been restored to any extent.

The remainder of the \$1,000,000 will form a permanent fund, the interest of which will go where the Norwegian storthing may direct. Many Norwegians in the United States are planning to go to Norway in 1914, when this money will be presented to the Norwegian government.

While Nebraska has not received as many Norwegian settlers as the states farther north, they yet constitute a fair proportion of its population, being mostly farmers. In Omaha, it is estimated, there are probably 1,500 Norwegians. Besides religious organizations, like Rev. M. W. Halvorsen's church on North Twenty-sixth street, near Hamilton, the local Norwegians have two societies which serve as centers for their social activities. One is a singing society and the other a pleasure club. As in the years past, these two societies will this year hold a joint picnic on May 17, at which the history of their nation and the glorious deeds of the men of other days will be fittingly honored.

Norwegians Came First in 1838.

O. N. Nelson of Minneapolis, in a history of "Scandinavians in the United States," gives some interesting details of the settlement of his people in this country. He says: "It is impossible to determine,



FINAR HALL
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either by statistics or by any historical records, the exact causes which have induced the majority of the Scandinavians to settle in the northwest. It is, no doubt, partly due to chance, climate, the direction which the early Scandinavian pioneers gave to the movement; but perhaps more on account of the northwest being just opened for settlement at the time when their immigration began. When some Norwegian immigrants arrived in Milwaukee, Wis., in 1839, in search of suitable land an old settler warned them against the climate of Illinois. He placed two men before them—one strong and healthy, the other weak and lean. Pointing toward the former, he said: "There you see a man from Wisconsin; the other is from Illinois." The Norwegians remained in Wisconsin. Slavery might, in the early days, have prejudiced them from going south. It is certain that movements of Scandinavians in that direction have at different times been attempted, but always failed."

Of the Scandinavian virtues, hard work, thriftiness and the desire to own land, Prof. Babcock of the University of Minnesota has written in the Forum: "The passion for the possession of land and for independence that goes with it have characterized the Scandinavians from the earliest times, and it is that

which has made them so valuable as citizens of the northwest. Had they preferred to huddle together in villages, or, still worse, to crowd into large cities, the progress of this section would have been materially slower."

Takes Naturally to Politics.

Prof. Babcock is also authority for the statement that in the '90s it was possible to travel 300 miles across Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota without once leaving Scandinavian-owned land. He points out that one of the most important indirect results of this love for land ownership is the hastening of naturalization. "But the Scandinavian immigrant hardly needs any great incentive to citizenship," says Prof. Babcock. In politics he is as much in his element as an Irishman in New York. His aptitude for politics and his interest in public affairs are natural. Be he Norwegian, Swede or Dane, he hastened and moved in an atmosphere electric with independence and individualism. Coupled with the love for politics among them is the love for religion and the church. The vast majority are Lutherans of one branch or another."

From 1820 to 1890, when the last tabulated statistics were published touching immigration from Europe, the Scandinavian countries contributed 1,250,000. It is estimated that up to 1900 at least 1,500,000 Scandinavians came over. The Norwegians were the first to begin arriving from the Scandinavians, in 1843, and in 1882 30,000 came to the United States, when United States Senator Knute Nelson, then a representative in congress, and other leading Norwegians got busy in bringing their countrymen to settle in northern Minnesota and Dakota territory. Of the newcomers from Norway in the earlier years of the heavy immigration 62 per cent were males, 65 per cent were between the ages of 15 and 40, 24 per cent were children under 15 and only 11 per cent were over 40. They were hardy people in the prime of life, ready to do hard work and ambitious to secure homes of their own.

In 1890 it was figured by the statisticians that one person out of every twenty-five in the United States was Scandinavian, by birth or parentage, and the Norwegians were strong enough to be almost the controlling power in several states. In Minnesota two-fifths of the total population is Scandinavian, and in that state the natives of Norway and their descendants are very numerous. Probably half of them are engaged in agriculture. Iowa and Wisconsin are almost as strongly impregnated with Scandinavian blood.

Like their brethren, the Swedes and Danes, the Norwegians take low rank in the tables of crimes and pauperism. They take naturally to farming and the solid trades, which saves them from many temptations. They believe intensely in education of the best sort for their children, with religious instruction in most cases, and these qualities, based on the good traditions of their native land, have led economists to speak of them as the most desirable immigrants, taken by and large, for the still sparsely settled states.

Trondhjem Old and Famous.

With its 40,000 inhabitants, and not far from the outer rim of the Arctic Circle, Trondhjem is a strange place in which to find one of the most remarkable cathedrals of northern Europe. But then it must be remembered that until the time of the union of Norway with Denmark at the close of the fourteenth century, Trondhjem was the capital of the kingdom. Now,

although the administrative capital of Norway is Christiania, Trondhjem, much further north, retains its privileges, as the most ancient city, of having the crown of St. Olaf placed on the king's head in its venerable cathedral.

From its foundation in 995 by Olaf Trygvason until toward the end of the sixteenth century the city retained its ancient name of Nidaros—i. e., "the mouth of the Nid." The name Trondhjem originally implied a district visited by a variety of misfortunes that arrested all progress, and not "the home of the throne," as is too often supposed. This modern interpretation is, therefore, as incorrect as the appellation of "Drontheim," given to it in the days of the Hanseatic league, and still persistently reproduced in many publications.

After the mysterious disappearance of Olaf Trygvason, about the year 1001, during an expedition to the Baltic, the kings of Denmark and Sweden, and Carl Erik, the son of Hakon the Great, divided Norway among them, but in reality the greater part of the country was held by Earl Erik and his brother, Earl Svend, under a little more than nominal vassalage. In the south some of the districts were more directly dependent upon Denmark and Sweden.

Fourteen years afterward another descendant of Harold Fairhair, who, as far as can be discovered, ruled Norway from 860 to 933, appeared in the country.

Entrance of King Olaf.

Earl Erik was by this time dead; Olaf succeeded in driving Svend from the land and became in a short time more thoroughly king of Norway than anyone had been since Harold Fairhair. He rebuilt Nidaros (the modern Trondhjem), which had been founded by Olaf Trygvason, and, like him, was a zealous adherent of Christianity. As soon as he was fairly settled he proceeded to enforce it on his subjects. Olaf suppressed heathen worship with the utmost vigor, and Christianity may be said to have become the professed religion of the land.

Thus it came about that at Trondhjem, then called Nidaros, "the mouth of the Nid," the cathedral rose above the shrines of Olaf and Magnus, and on the very spot where the body of the former had been hidden after his last disastrous fight against Canute, who had added the crown of Norway to those of Denmark and England.

To Olaf's shrine in particular, and to Olaf's well, which is embedded within the cathedral walls, came pilgrims from all parts of Europe, bringing their gifts with them. Olaf was canonized by popular acclamation almost immediately after his martyrdom. But it was not till 1150 that his countrymen obtained from Pope Eugenius III a promise of the enfranchisement of Norway from the spiritual supremacy of the metropolitan of Lund.

Between 1016 and 1030 Olaf the Saint had built a church on the spot where now stands the present chapter house, an apsidal parallelogram just detached from the north aisle of the choir, but connected with it by a short passage. Olaf was buried a little to the south of his own church, where the high altar of the cathedral is now situated.

Between 1036 and 1047 Magnus the Good raised a small wooden chapel over St. Olaf's grave, and, soon afterward Harold Haardraade built a stone church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin immediately to the westward of this and on the spot occupied by the present choir. In this state this group of three churches stood during the troubled period that ensued.